

BOOK NOTICES

MICHAEL H. GRAHAM, JOAN PARKER, AND PAUL K. DAYTON (EDS). 2011. **The Essential Naturalist**. (ISBN-13: 978-0-226-305790-7, pbk.). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois 60637, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.press.uchicago.edu). \$39.00, 552 pp., 4 halftones, 18 line drawings, 39 tables, 6" × 9".

From the Publisher: "Like nearly every area of scholarly inquiry today, the biological sciences are broken into increasingly narrow fields and subfields, its practitioners divided into ecologists, evolutionary biologists, taxonomists, paleontologists, and much more. But all these splintered pieces have their origins in the larger field of natural history—and in this era where climate change and relentless population growth are irrevocably altering the world around us, perhaps it's time to step back and take a new, fresh look at the larger picture.

"*The Essential Naturalist* offers exactly that: a wide-ranging, eclectic collection of writings from more than eight centuries of observations of the natural world, from Leeuwenhoek to E.O. Wilson, from von Humboldt to Rachel Carson. Featuring commentaries by practicing scientists that offer personal accounts of the importance of the long tradition of natural history writing to their current research, the volume serves simultaneously as an overview of the field's long history and as an inspirational starting point for new explorations, for trained scientists and amateur enthusiasts alike."

Just reading the Table of Contents will make you want to have this book in your personal library. *The Essential Naturalist* is broken into five broad subject areas: 1) Inspiration, 2) Exploration, 3) Initiation, 4) Intuition, and 5) Unification. Robert T. Paine, University of Washington, Seattle, writes in his introduction "A Foundation Built by Giants" that "the attraction of humans to nature is clear and ubiquitous." Paine goes on to define Natural History as the systematic study of natural organisms through observations. I like this definition. For sure, one cannot underestimate the power of personal observation in science. It is the foundation and most powerful tool of any naturalist!—Barney Lipscomb, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 1700 University Dr., Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3400, U.S.A.